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SUBJECT: ITALIAN POSITION ON EU BATTERY DIRECTIVE

REF: STATE 259043

1. On December 20, Franco Macor of the Italian Mandatory Consortium for Spent Batteries and Lead Waste (known by the Italian initials COBAT) responded to refTel request for information on Italy's views regarding the EU battery directive.

2. What is Italy's position on the ban of lead/cadmium/mercury?

-- Italy is ready to collect, dispose or recycle all kinds of batteries, but up until now has only had experience with spent lead batteries, which have been processed with considerable success. Looking ahead, Macor said that it was not clear if COBAT would expand operations or the GOI would create another consortium on the successful COBAT model to process nickel/cadmium and/or lithium batteries. Italy favors a ban on mercury batteries, he said.

3. Does Italy have a collection system in place for batteries?

-- COBAT is a non-profit organization set up by the GOI in 1988 under Law 475 (last amended in 2004). It guarantees the collection, transportation and recycling of spent lead batteries in order to recover the lead and sulfuric acid, if possible. According to law 39/2002 (EEC 2001), (begin quote) anyone holding spent lead batteries or lead waste is obliged to consign these to COBAT directly or through subjects designated by, or authorized by, the Consortium (end quote). Members of the Consortium consist of manufacturers, collectors and recycling plants (of which there are six in Italy). In 2003, COBAT collected more than 200,000 tons, or 3.48 kilograms per inhabitant (one kilogram equals 2.2 pounds). In the course of the activities listed below, the Consortium contracts with private or public entities to collect the spent batteries and other forms of lead waste, appoints geographic area managers in charge of collection, and promotes public awareness through publicity campaigns. COBAT operates throughout Italy and carries out the following:

-- Collection and storage of spent lead batteries and lead waste;

-- Transport of spent lead batteries to recycling firms, including firms located in foreign countries;

-- Environment-friendly disposal of spent lead batteries if recycling is impossible or not economically viable;

-- Promotion of scientific and technological research to develop new disposal and processing methods.

4. What is the position of Italy on collection targets?

-- According to Macor, COBAT boasts almost 100 percent collection of spent lead batteries. Italy is awaiting EU decisions before setting targets for the other types of batteries.

5. What is the position of Italy on the financing of collection?

-- Producers or importers of batteries must pay a small fee to COBAT, but they are reimbursed for the expenditure by their consumers. The fee is 0.83 Euros (one U.S. dollar is equal to approximately 1.33 Euros) for a small automobile battery of 20-70 amperes per hour and 1.65 Euros for batteries more than 70 amperes per hour. COBAT revenues come from the collection fees and from selling collected spent batteries to recycling companies. Because of the high market price for lead, COBAT is currently making money. Since the Consortium is a non-profit organization, however, Macor indicated that the collection fee for lead batteries was likely to be reduced next year.

6. Has Italy formally assessed the impact this directive will have on domestic appliance and battery manufacturers?

-- Macor was not aware of any study specifically on Italy. Such a survey would not seem to be too difficult to

undertake, however, as Italy produces mainly lead batteries for automobiles and not many for other uses, according to Macor.

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